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SUBJECT: ALLAWI/SUNNI ARAB GROUPS WILL ACCEPT ELECTION RESULTS - PONDERING PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD,
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Ibrahim al-Janabi, Chief of Staff to Dr. Ayad Allawi, told PolOffs January 8 that the political parties working with Allawi and the Sunni Arabs (MARAM) are beginning to concede the reality of the election results. He anticipated that they ultimately will negotiate for entry a national unity government. After a discussion of the MARAM meeting with the international monitoring group IMIE January 7 (septel), he said serious government formation talks will not begin until after Muslim Id al-Adha holiday that starts January 10. During the meeting, al-Janabi took a call from Dr. Ayad Allawi who told al-Janabi to return from his Id al-Adha vacation in Jordan by January 13 for political party talks that will begin the following day in Baghdad. (NOTE: Dr. Allawi met with Iraqi President Talabani January 7, but they reportedly did not discuss the formation of the new government. End Note.)

2. (C) Al-Janabi agreed with the assessment that the IMIE report could help spur changes in a future Election Law or Election Commission law. Al-Janabi acknowledged the importance of the final IMIE report because he considers the political future to be the provincial elections with the eventual shift to greater federalization. He speculated that the Iraqi National List, Tawafuq, and the National Dialogue Front could perhaps run as one group in these elections.

3. (C) Al-Janabi also told us that MARAM had not rescheduled a demonstration originally scheduled for January 6 in Firdous Square. PolOff reminded al-Janabi that these demonstrations could spark counter-demonstrations by Shia Coalition supporters, with the danger that the situation could spiral out of control. Al-Janabi said he did not see the benefit of demonstrations now given both the current state of play with the international observers and the perceived deteriorating security situation in Iraq.

4. (C) Comment. The MARAM group, as a force of rejection and denial, has substantially lowered its rhetoric and its expectations. Adnan Pachachi, another senior Allawi list member, told Sharqiya TV on January 8 that the international monitor report "might not rise to the level of our expectations." Although he did not promise the Allawi government would join unity government talks, he laid out detailed thinking about their position on a unity government. Similarly, Adnan Dulaymi from the Tawwafuq Front in MARAM, told Sharqiya TV on January 8 that he welcomed a national unity government. It is interesting that Al-Janabi suggested that the same group members could keep working together for the provincial elections, although we don't know how serious he was. (He even joked that MARAM should change its name since "refuse" the elections would no longer apply as the group takes on a new identity.) If this intent comes to fruition, an electoral alliance bringing together Allawi, the Sunni Arab Tawwafuq and National Dialog Fronts and a mix of other, smaller Shia and Sunni Arab political figures would be an encouraging even if its combined electoral appeal will initially be limited. In any case, in the more immediate future is getting the Allawi and Sunni Arab leaders to recognize the utility of joining a unity government and to work with the Kurds. Clearly we are making progress there. End comment.

KHALILZAD